

### **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions and listings of the claims in the application.

1. (currently amended) A rail ~~component in association with a post and a plank~~for deck railing, said rail ~~component~~ comprising:

a metal substrate for facilitating securement of ~~said plank to said rail component~~  
in said deck railing; and

a composite outer layer comprising a plastic and at least one filler, said composite formed on said substrate such that all sides of said substrate are coated by said outer layer.

2. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 1 wherein said substrate is a sheet.

3. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 1 wherein said substrate has a higher bending strength than a comparable size piece of said composite.

4. (canceled)

5. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 1 wherein said substrate has at least one perforation.

6. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 1 wherein said plastic is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, and polyvinyl chloride.

7. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 1 wherein said at least one filler is selected from the group consisting of cellulosic fillers and inorganic fillers.

8. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 1 wherein said composite is formed about said substrate by a process selected from the group consisting of extrusion, compression molding, and injection molding.

9. (currently amended) A rail ~~component in association with a post and a plank~~ for deck railing, said rail ~~component~~ comprising:

a sheet of a metal substrate for facilitating securement of ~~said plank to said rail component~~ in said deck railing; and

a cellulosic-filled plastic composite outer layer formed about said sheet of said substrate such that all sides of said substrate are coated by said outer layer.

10. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 9 wherein said sheet has a higher bending strength than a comparable size piece of said plastic composite.

11. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 9 wherein said substrate has at least one perforation.

12. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 9 wherein said plastic is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, and polyvinyl chloride.

13. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 9 wherein said plastic composite is formed about said substrate by a process selected from the group consisting of extrusion, compression molding, and injection molding.

14. (currently amended) A rail ~~component in association with a post and a plank for~~  
deck railing, said rail ~~component~~ comprising:

a metal substrate having a perforation, said metal substrate for facilitating  
securement of ~~said plank to said rail component~~ in said deck railing; and

a composite outer layer comprising a plastic and at least one filler, said  
composite formed on said substrate such that all sides of said substrate are coated by  
said outer layer and said composite passes through said perforation in said substrate.

15. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 14 wherein said substrate is a  
sheet.

16. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 14 wherein said substrate has a  
higher bending strength than a comparable size piece of said composite.

17. (canceled)

18. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 14 wherein said substrate has a  
plurality of perforations through which the composite passes.

19. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 14 wherein said plastic is  
selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, and polyvinyl  
chloride.

20. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 14 wherein said at least one filler  
is selected from the group consisting of cellulosic fillers and inorganic fillers.

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21. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 14 wherein said composite is formed about said substrate by a process selected from the group consisting of extrusion, compression molding, and injection molding.

22. (currently amended) The rail ~~component~~ of claim 14 wherein:

said substrate is a metal sheet having a plurality of perforations; and

said composite is a cellulosic-filled plastic composite, said composite passing through said plurality of perforations.